

# THE MRC CONNECTION

## JUNE 2007



Peninsula Medical Reserve Corps, 416 J. Clyde Morris Blvd., Newport News, VA 23601

## Poll Shows Many Unready For Public Health Crisis

Lisa Schnirring • Staff Writer

May 8, 2007 (CIDRAP News) – A recent survey sponsored by the American Public Health Association (APHA) indicates that about a third of Americans have made no preparations for a public health emergency and nearly 90% have prepared less than they think they should.

The APHA survey, released in April at an expert roundtable discussion during National Public Health Week, was recently posted on the association's Web site. The online survey was conducted in February by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, based in Washington, DC. It included 925 adults and sought the input of several specific groups, including mothers with children younger than 5, hourly wageworkers, and adults who have chronic medical conditions.

The survey group also polled 120 employers and 150 school superintendents and interviewed a small group of regional food bank administrators and local food pantry and soup kitchen managers.

Among the survey's key findings:

- Thirty-two percent of the public have taken no special steps to prepare for a public health emergency that could leave them short of food, water, or medication.



- An 87% majority said they knew they had not done enough and could do more to prepare for a public health emergency.
- Forty percent of respondents said they had taken steps to prepare in the past, such as after the Sep 11 terrorist attacks, but had since let their plans lapse.
- More than a quarter (27%) said they were prepared for an emergency, but only about half (14%) had the 3-day supply of food, water, and medication currently recommended by the American Red Cross for general disaster planning.
- Close to half—46%—of respondents had not assembled a disaster supply kit.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, executive director of the APHA, said in a press release that the survey findings show public health officials have a long way to go to prepare the nation for public health emergencies.

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The PENINSULA Medical Reserve Corps' mission is to augment and assist community operations during large-scale emergencies, aid in the response to pressing health care needs, and improve community emergency preparedness.

## MRC Training Calendar

COURSE	Date / Time	Location	Instructor
Introduction to Pandemic Influenza	May 22 <sup>nd</sup> 6:00 – 8:00 pm	Botetourt Elementary School Library in Gloucester	Steve Rykal, Emergency Planner Three Rivers Health District
ARC: Shelter Operations	June 5 <sup>th</sup> 9:00 am – 12:00 pm	Hampton Roads Red Cross Chapter, Newport News	Bob Green, HR Red Cross
ARC: Shelter Operations	June 9 <sup>th</sup> 9:00 am – 12:00 pm	Hampton Roads Red Cross Chapter, Newport News	Bob Green, HR Red Cross
<u>June 9<sup>th</sup> Power Training Day</u> 9:00 – 10:30 am: Orientation or Intro to Pan Flu 10:30 am – 12:30 pm: Intro to Terrorism (Snacks provided.)		Peninsula Health Center Auditorium	Jennifer Freeland Kevin Pearce Rich Flannery, MRC Volunteer
AHA: Healthcare Provider CPR	June 19 <sup>th</sup> 8:00 am – 12:00 pm	Mary Immaculate Hospital	Brenda Hill
TRAIN-THE-TRAINER: Basic Skills in Disaster Behavioral Health (SEE FLYER)	June 22 <sup>nd</sup> 9:30 am – 4:30 pm	Eastern State Hospital Williamsburg	VA Dept of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services & VDH
<u>June 23<sup>rd</sup> Power Training Day</u> 9:00 – 10:30 am: MRC Orientation 10:30 am – 12:30 pm: Intro to Disasters		Rappahannock Community College, Rm 201, 52 Campus Dr., Annex Bldg, Warsaw	Steve Rykal, Emergency Planner Three Rivers Health District
Introduction to Pandemic Influenza <u>OR</u> MRC Orientation	June 26 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 – 8:00 pm	Peninsula Health Center Auditorium & Conference #1	Kevin Pearce, Emergency Planner Peninsula Health District Jennifer Freeland, MRC Coordinator
MRC Orientation	June 26 <sup>th</sup> , 6:00 – 7:30 pm	Page Middle School Library, 5628 George Washington Hwy, Gloucester	Steve Rykal, Emergency Planner Three Rivers Health District
AHA: Heartsaver CPR	June 29 <sup>th</sup> 8:30 am – 12:30 pm	Mary Immaculate Hospital	Smoot
<b>Hampton Roads Disaster Volunteer Day</b> <b>SEE ATTACHED FLYER &amp; REGISTRATION FORM</b>	July 14 <sup>th</sup> 8:00 am – 3:00 pm	Liberty Baptist Church Hampton	Many state, regional and local speakers
<u>July 21<sup>st</sup> Power Training Day</u> 9:00 – 10:30 am: MRC Orientation 10:30 am – 12:30 pm: Intro to Disasters		King William Co. Health Dept, 167 Courthouse Landing Rd, King William Courthouse	Steve Rykal, Emergency Planner Three Rivers Health District

Training Calendar is continued on Page 3.

COURSE	Date / Time	Location	Instructor
Intro to Disasters	July 24 <sup>th</sup> 6:00 – 7:30 pm	Page Middle School Library, 5628 George Washington Hwy, Gloucester	Steve Rykal, Emergency Planner Three Rivers Health District
AHA: Heartsaver CPR	July 27 <sup>th</sup> 8:30 am – 12:30 pm	Mary Immaculate Hospital	Gibbs, Public Health Nurse, Peninsula Health District
MRC Orientation	July 30 <sup>th</sup> 6:30 – 8:00 pm	Peninsula Health Center Auditorium	Jennifer Freeland, MRC Coordinator
AHA: Healthcare Provider CPR	August 2nd 8:00 am – 12:00 pm	Mary Immaculate Hospital	Brenda Hill, Public Health Nurse, Peninsula Health District
<u>August 11<sup>th</sup> Power Training Day</u> 9:00 – 10:30 am: Orientation 10:30 am – 12:30 pm: Epidemiology 101 or Intro to Disasters (Concurrent sessions. Snacks provided.)		Peninsula Health Center Auditorium	Jennifer Freeland, MRC Coordinator Cynthia Reiken, Epidemiologist Peninsula Health District Mark Junghans, MRC Volunteer
IS-700: NIMS (Tentative)	August 11 <sup>th</sup> 10:00 – 12:30	Peninsula Health Center Auditorium	Bob Ditch, Peninsula MRC Volunteer
AHA: Blood Pressure Training for medical volunteers	August 11th 8:30 am – 12:30 pm	Peninsula Health Center Conference Room #1	Keri Houser, RN, Public Health Nurse, Peninsula Health District
HSUS: Disaster Animal Response Team Training	August 16 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup> 8:00 am – 4:00 pm	Peninsula Health Center	Go to HUSUS.org to register. Cost is \$110 for early registration.
Heartsaver & AED	August 31st 8:30 am – 12:30 pm	Mary Immaculate Hospital	Pam Parham, RN, Public Health Nurse, Peninsula Health District

**Contact Rachelle to register for any training session at [Rachelle.Simpkins@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Rachelle.Simpkins@vdh.virginia.gov) or 757.594.8045.** Please Note: Classes with less than 10 volunteers registered may be cancelled.

## I-64 reversal exercise on May 23, 2007 a success

The Virginia Department of Transportation briefly closed 36 ramps along Interstate 64 eastbound, between the I-295/I-64 interchange and the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel on May 20. VDOT, Virginia National Guard and Virginia State Police personnel supervised the closures, which simulated a portion of the lane reversal during a Hampton Roads evacuation.

The focus of the exercise was to test command and control aspects of a reversal and to test state agencies' ability to communicate and coordinate effectively with other state agencies and the National Guard.

During a reversal, I-64 westbound traffic traveling from Norfolk and Virginia Beach will be shifted onto what are normally the eastbound lanes of I-64 just before the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel in Norfolk. Motorists will continue traveling on the eastbound lanes until they reach I-295 in Richmond, approximately 80 miles. The exercise practiced lowering the gates only, and no traffic was reversed.

Visit VDOT's evacuation information page:  
<http://www.vdot.virginia.gov/hurricane>. A slide-show of the exercise is also available online:  
[http://www.virginiadot.org/images/slideshows/lane\\_reversal/index.htm](http://www.virginiadot.org/images/slideshows/lane_reversal/index.htm).

-Virginia Department of Emergency Management Biweekly Update

## **Poll Shows Many Unready For Public Health Crisis** (Continued from page 1)

Lisa Schnirring, Staff Writer, CIDRAP News

"No one can predict where the next natural disaster, major storm, or disease outbreak will strike, but when it does, it is likely to disrupt basic services, leaving people without electricity, water, food or needed medications," he added.

In the press release, the APHA said the survey shows that several vulnerable subgroups are lagging in their emergency preparedness efforts. For example, 58% of mothers with young children said they did not have a 3-day supply of water for their families, and only 61% of people with chronic health conditions had at least a 2-week supply of medication.

The 17-page survey report says the term "public health crisis" does not resonate with people, though respondents reported being concerned about specific events, such as natural disasters, that might lead to one. Only 26% thought that a public health crisis would affect their family in the next year or two, but 57% thought a severe storm might strike their area in the next few years, 47% thought an infectious disease outbreak such as the flu is likely, and 43% believed a foodborne disease outbreak is likely.

In other findings, researchers reported that only 37% of employers believed that a public health crisis would affect their business during the next few years, and only 18% said they could continue paying their employees if business operations were interrupted. Though 63% of employees realized they might not be paid during a public health crisis, only 15% had saved enough money to provide for their families if such an event occurs.

School administrators generally reported a high level of preparedness in the form of evacuation, communication, and community sheltering plans, but few said they had enough drinking water or food to last students for 3 days.

Representatives of regional food distribution centers said they had devoted a lot of time and resources to preparedness planning, but those from local pantries or food shelves reported they were not prepared for public health emergencies, according to the APHA.

All groups that were surveyed said cost was a major barrier to their preparedness actions.

Greg Dworkin, MD, one of the editors of the FluWiki, an interactive pandemic planning Web site, told CIDRAP News he commends the APHA for commissioning the survey and said it's important to gauge the public's preparedness opinions from time to time, rather than making assumptions.

The survey results suggest that preparedness messages are getting through to the public, but that people are not following through with action, said Dworkin, who is chief of pediatric pulmonology at Danbury Hospital in Danbury, Conn. "That's a real problem: the public hears the information, but the next question is how they process it," he said.

Some public health officials are overly concerned that the public will overreact or panic if they use specific terms when referring to public health threats, but not using specific terms represents a missed opportunity, Dworkin asserted. "The message has to be crystal clear. Say 'pandemic' if that's what you mean," he said.

Also, it likely takes sustained, high-profile, and consistent messages to successfully persuade the public to prepare for public health emergencies, Dworkin said. "It's a marathon, rather than a sprint," he added.

### **See also:**

APHA opinion survey on public health preparedness

[http://www.nphw.org/2007/pg\\_tools\\_poll.htm](http://www.nphw.org/2007/pg_tools_poll.htm)

## MRC Emergency Preparedness and Public Health Outreach Events

EVENT	Date/Time	Location	Volunteer Duties
City of Newport News Employee Fair	June 6 <sup>th</sup> 9:00 am – 3:00 pm	City Center, Fountain Plaza II Newport News	Volunteers needed to provide emergency preparedness education and information on the MRC.
Food Bank Annual Agency Conference	June 8 <sup>th</sup> 9:00 am – 2:45 pm	West Hampton Baptist Church, Aberdeen Rd.	Volunteers needed to provide blood pressure screenings and education on MRC and emergency preparedness.
Rivahfest	Saturday, June 16 <sup>th</sup> 7:30 am – 5:00pm	Essex, Prince Street & Water Lane area	Volunteers needed to provide blood pressure screenings and education on MRC and emergency preparedness.
James City County Fair	Saturday, June 22 <sup>nd</sup> 9:00 am – 5:00 pm	Chickahominy Riverfront Park (Route 5) 1350 John Tyler Highway	Volunteers needed to provide blood pressure screenings and education on MRC and emergency preparedness.
BP Screenings at Mennowood Retirement Center	Tuesday, June 26 <sup>th</sup> 2:00 – 4:00 pm	Warwick Blvd., Newport News	1 volunteer needed to provide BP screenings to residents with Winnie Bennett.
Homeless Outreach Collaborative Team – Clean Comfort & HIV	Wednesday, June 27 <sup>th</sup> 8:30 am – 3:30 pm	Julius Conn Gymnasium, 328 30 <sup>th</sup> Street Newport News	Volunteers needed to provide blood pressure screenings.
Newport News Neighborhood Network Week	Wednesday, June 27 <sup>th</sup> 2:00 – 5:00 pm	Marshall Courts Public Housing Complex, Computer lab Newport News	Volunteers needed to provide blood pressure screenings and education on MRC and emergency preparedness.
<b>NEW!</b> Peninsula Health Center Annual Pharmacy Inventory	Friday, June 29 <sup>th</sup> 8:00 am – 5:00 pm	Peninsula Health Center Pharmacy	Volunteers needed to assist with Annual Pharmacy Inventory. Need to have experience in inventory procedures or pharmacy tech tasks. AM & PM shifts.
Heritage Day Festival	Saturday, June 30 <sup>th</sup> 8:00 am – 2:00 pm	Deltaville Community Association Building 17342 General Puller Hwy	Volunteers needed to provide emergency preparedness education and information on the MRC.
Gloucester County Fair	August 10 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup> TBD	Gloucester Fair Grounds at Ark Park	Volunteers needed to provide blood pressure screenings and education on MRC and emergency preparedness.
<b>NEW!</b> First Response: Mass Dispensing Exercise	August 14 <sup>th</sup> & 15 <sup>th</sup> 8 am – 5:00 pm	Peninsula Health Center Pharmacy	Volunteers need to assist pharmacy in dispensing “mock” prescriptions (M&Ms) to First responders and Emergency Personnel. Need Pharmacy Tech or pharmacy clerk skills. AM & PM shifts.

To volunteer for any of these events please contact Jennifer at [Jennifer.freeland@vdh.vrgnia.gov](mailto:Jennifer.freeland@vdh.vrgnia.gov)



## OSHA Releases Pandemic Flu Guidance For Healthcare Workers

Lisa Schnirring, Staff Writer

May 21, 2007 (CIDRAP News) – Experts predict that an influenza pandemic will place a long and heavy burden on the medical community, which prompted the US Department of Labor (DOL) to develop guidance for healthcare worker safety that it released today at a press conference.

The guidelines, released on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Web site today, cover a range of healthcare settings, from emergency departments to ambulances to temporary patient care facilities. The 100-page document is a follow-up to guidelines released by OSHA in February that provided general guidance for all types of workplaces.

Edwin G. Foulke Jr, assistant secretary of labor for OSHA, told reporters today that the guidance for the healthcare workers and other employee groups is part of the Bush administration's national pandemic strategy. "We have to ensure that essential public services will continue, and only by protecting healthcare workers can we weather a pandemic," he said.

The OSHA guidelines are based on traditional infection control and occupational hygiene principles but may need to be modified or supplemented as more details become known about the transmission once a pandemic strain emerges, Foulke said.

The guidance for healthcare workers is divided into four sections that cover clinical information on influenza, infection control, pandemic influenza preparedness, and specific OSHA standards. Donald Wright, director of OSHA's office of occupational medicine, said he anticipates that healthcare workers will be most interested in the infection control section.

A focus of the infection control section is the "weak links" in hospital infection control, such as hand hygiene and respiratory protection compliance. The section stresses that it's not enough to question employees about hygiene practices; institutions need to observe employee behavior, implement strategies to promote the recommended practices, and cultivate a safety climate that promotes good infection control behaviors.



In reviewing several possible patient care scenarios, the OSHA guidance, for example, suggests what to do when a hospital runs out of single rooms for patients: Patients with suspected pandemic influenza could be grouped in cohorts in areas of the facility where they receive care from experienced staff and are isolated from main thoroughfares.

OSHA suggests several surveillance activities that would be helpful for hospitals in a pandemic, such as tracking employees who have cared for patients with suspected or confirmed influenza or screening workers each day for influenza like symptoms.

Guidance on personal protective equipment is consistent with other OSHA and US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) advisories, Wright said. Though the HHS pandemic influenza plan does not recommend goggles and face shields for routine care of patients with pandemic influenza, OSHA advises that workers who are within 3 feet of a coughing patient should wear those items.

OSHA strongly urges healthcare institutions to stockpile N-95 respirators and other protective equipment, warning that the items will be scarce once a pandemic strikes. "Employers and employees should not count on obtaining any additional protective equipment not already purchased and stockpiled," the report said. "Therefore, it is important for healthcare facilities to consider respiratory protection for essential personnel to assure that employees are ready, willing, and able to care for the general population."

The guidelines recognized that when supplies are scarce, employees may need to consider reusing their respirators. Reuse of disposable respirators should be limited to a single wearer, be labeled with the employee's name, and include clear instruction about how to avoid spreading contamination from the outside of the respirator. Wearing a face shield over the respirator may help keep the exterior of the device clean, the OSHA guidance suggests.

Article continued on Page 7.

## OSHA Guidance Continued from page 6

Several other institutional issues are addressed, such as cleaning patient care equipment, disinfecting patient rooms, and disposing of solid waste.

Extensive appendices include several resources for healthcare institutions, such as communication tools for promoting employee infection control practices, strategies for planning respiratory protections programs, triage algorithms, supply and pandemic planning checklists, and even a crisis communication guide for handling questions from the media.

### For more information see also:

OSHA pandemic preparedness and response guidance for healthcare workers and employers  
[http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA\\_pandemic\\_health.pdf](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA_pandemic_health.pdf)

May 21 OSHA [press release](#)

Feb 8 CIDRAP News article "[New OSHA guidance targets pandemic flu](#)"

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## From the Coordinator...

### *The word is getting out...*

Now, that we have been out at events and in the community we are receiving more and more requests for us to attend outreach events. If you take a look at the calendar you'll notice that there are 11 events this month! Did I once say we would only do 3 or 4? Some events are pretty low key and allow you the opportunities to really get to talk to people, while events like James City County Fair are very busy. Volunteering for outreach events gives you the opportunity to share your knowledge and skills with other people in our communities.

DISASTER VOLUNTEER DAY! In the past week I have emailed the DVD flyer and registration form to over 400 people and they have forwarded it on to others. The topics and demonstrations are going to be awesome and the word about DVD is out in the disaster volunteer community. Be sure to send your registration form or email Bettina Hilliard, MRC volunteer & DVD Registration Coordinator. We are limited to 400 attendees this year and based on the response we will come very close to reaching our limit.

**Hampton Roads' Disaster Volunteers  
Together WE Respond!**



Training for Disaster Mental Health and Psychological First Aid is needed in order to meet the needs of our communities. We need instructors who are willing to be trained to teach disaster mental health to other MRC volunteers. You must be a Mental Health Professional. Additionally, we need MRC volunteers who are willing to become trained to provide informational presentations on Pandemic Influenza. Please contact me if you are interested in becoming a part of our training team.

Well, the words that were spoken were all signs in the Basic Sign Language class. Brad Hill, a pastor of a deaf congregation at West Hampton Baptist Church, instructed an excellent class that gave us great information and some basic signs that would allow us to adequately communicate to deaf individuals. We plan on offering similar classes later this fall. Stay tuned for more information.

Summer has begun. Stay cool!

Thank you for all you do to  
*Protect the Health of the Peninsula!*

*Jennifer Freeland*  
PENINSULA MRC Coordinator

**Contact Information:**

**Jennifer Freeland**

Cell Phone: 757.651.6788

**Rachelle Simpkins**

Assistant Coordinator

Rachelle.Simpkins@vdh.virginia.gov

Our office is located at the Peninsula Health Center next to Riverside Hospital, 416 J. Clyde Morris Blvd.

**Office Phone: 757.594.8045**

**Office Fax: 757.594.7714**



**THANK YOU to the following volunteers for volunteering during the month of MAY**

- ★ Carolyn Conley and Winnie Bennett for volunteering to provide BP screenings at Mennowood Retirement Center.
- ★ Jeni Newton and Sybille Baumeler for attending the Community Safety Fair in Hampton.
- ★ Chuck & Pat Olson, Peggy Williams, and Alice Moody for volunteering at the Community Based Emergency Response Seminar in Newport News.
- ★ Mary & Wayne Long for collating and mailing the newsletter.
- ★ Pat Olson for providing BP screenings at Women's Health Day.
- ★ Winnie Bennett, Sybille Baumeler, and Bettina Hilliard for providing office support.
- ★ Anne Hutcheson for providing administrative support to the Middlesex Health Department.

***It takes great volunteers to make the Peninsula MRC a success!***

**Don't forget to protect yourself and your family members from skin cancer by applying sunscreen while outside this summer.**



**PENINSULA MRC**

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